

The Mountain Climber

A New Model for Public Transit in the Flathead



2019 Planning Efforts

- Eagle Transit and the 5-Year Transportation Development Plan
- What we learned in Acadia National Park
- Re-imagining transit in Glacier National Park, Whitefish Mountain Ski Resort & gateway communities
- Engaging local partners for success
- Next steps

A World-Class National Park and a World-Class Ski Resort deserve World-Class Transportation!



An Impressive Combination

- Flathead Valley is in a unique situation compared to other National Park communities
 - A massive National Park
 - A world-renown Ski Resort
 - An International Airport
 - Three major towns to handle +3 million tourists



An overview of Whitefish Ski Resort

Year-Round Service

- Glacier National Park
 - May through September
- Whitefish Ski Resort
 - December through April
- With these dates, jobs are created that support workers year-round



Summertime gondola

Eagle Transit

Flathead County is the Valley's public transit provider, operating as Eagle Transit. Last year we provided 116,000 rides. We offer:

- Fixed route bus service in Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls
- Commuter service between the three cities.
- Paratransit/Dial-Ride service for people with disabilities.

Since 2007, Eagle Transit has operated the free shuttle service in Glacier National Park through a Cooperative Agreement between the County, GNP and Montana DOT. Annual ridership has ballooned from approximately 55,000 the first year to 235,000.

5-Year Transportation Development Plan

Looking at our system as a whole

- Transit is all about integration and connection

Focusing on what's important to our stakeholders

- If we want partners we need to act like one

Creating opportunities for innovation and expansion

- The status quo isn't an option

Acadia

Let's start with a sunset



In June, four of us from Eagle Transit left the Flathead Valley on a trip to Bar Harbor, Maine to learn about public transportation in Acadia National Park and in the communities around it.

Acadia National Park, its visitors, its gateway communities and their economies are similar to Glacier National Park and the Flathead Valley in many ways.

- ✓ 3 million plus visitors a year, mostly during the summer
- ✓ Communities of similar size and distance to the Park
- ✓ Local economy intertwined with tourism driven by the Park

The public transportation provider that serves Acadia runs inside and outside the Park, and Eagle Transit does too.

So we went to see how we could improve our system.

This is who we talked to...

Acadia National Park

- John Kelly, Management Assistant, Acadia National Park
- The Acadia National Park Management Team

Downeast Transportation

- Paul Murphy, Executive Director
- Island Explorer Operations Staff

Maine Department of Transportation

- Barbie-Jo Lord, Rural Grant Manager and Transportation Planning Analyst
- MaryAnne Hayes, Multi-modal Planning Division Manager

Friends of Acadia

- David McDonald, President and CEO
- Stephanie Clement, Conservation Director

Management of 4 Local Hotels

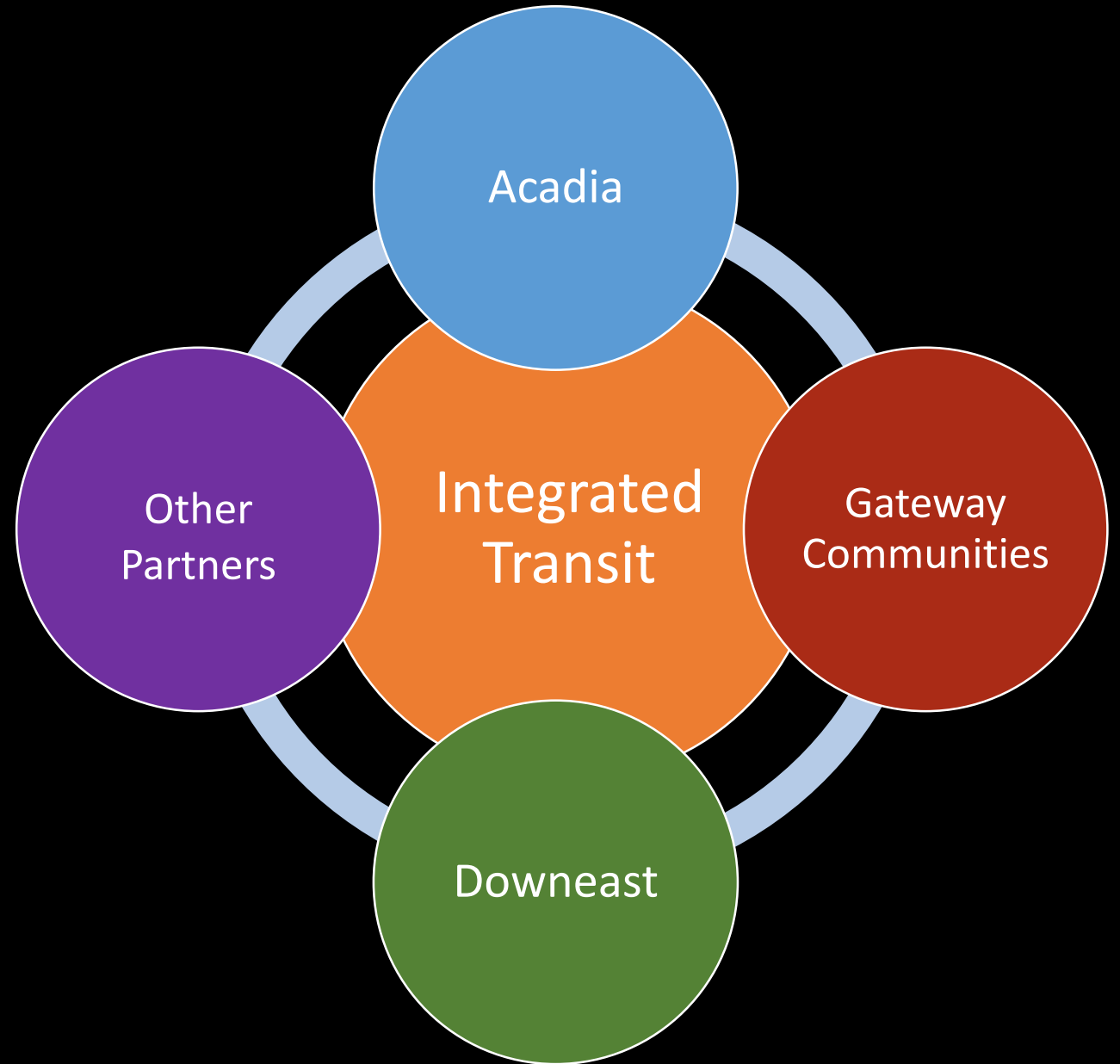
Local Residents and Visitors

- Business Owners
- Workers
- Shoppers and diners

This is what we came home with...

Acadia National Park partnered with the local public transit provider, **Downtown Transportation**, to champion and lead a collaborative effort to create an **integrated public transportation system** in and around the Park to manage visitors and benefit the Park and the gateway communities

Intersection of
interests lead to
integration of
infrastructure,
investment and
image



The Island Explorer was born.



39 Island Explorer buses move people all around the gateway communities, from the communities to the Park, within the Park and between communities.

The Island Explorer is the brand both inside and outside the Park.

The Island Explorer stops at the airport, hotels, restaurants and bars, shops, points of interest, trails, beaches, campgrounds and in and out of Acadia National Park.

It runs early and late, 7 days a week.

The Island Explorer reduces cars in the Park by providing seamless access from the gateway communities.

It enhances the visitor experience inside the Park by offering frequent service to popular areas with limited wait times.

The Island Explorer connects visitors to the many activities the gateway communities have to offer, creating desirable destinations outside the Park.

Visitors can enjoy an expanded experience that economically benefits the communities and helps relieve pressure points in the Park.

Downtown Bar Harbor thrives
because of the Island Explorer.



Visitors and workers don't have to worry about a lack of parking when they use the Island Explorer.



The Island Explorer Information Center is centrally located in the downtown district.



The Island Explorer connects the gateway communities to each other and the Park.





Local stores are fun and unique.

Many products are locally produced



And Park-themed



The communities help the Park.



The Island Explorer takes visitors
to experiences.



The Island Explorer connects to private transportation services to the benefit of all.





The Island Explorer supports transit to remote islands and disadvantaged communities

Visible and widespread marketing is key

Acadia Directs Visitors to the Island Explorer

From the Acadia website

Go Local on the [Island Explorer](#)

During the summer months, the Park Loop Road and parking lots at carriage road entrances can be quite crowded. Parking is permitted only in posted areas, parking lots, and established roadside pullouts. To avoid the crowds and parking issues, it's a good idea to ride the fare-free Island Explorer.

From late June through early October, it provides service between park destinations, local communities, and Bar Harbor-Hancock County Regional Airport. Regularly scheduled buses stop at destinations in the park, including campgrounds, carriage road entrances, and many trailheads. You can also flag down buses along their route. Drivers will pick up passengers anywhere it is safe to stop. Bus schedules are available visitor contact stations, and the Island Explorer [website](#).

The Island Explorer directs and connects visitors to community businesses



ISLAND EXPLORER

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MAPS & TIMETABLES

[Route Finder](#)
[1. Oceanarium](#)
[2. Eden Street](#)
[3. Sand Beach](#)
[4. Loop Road](#)
[5. Jordan Pond](#)
[6. Brown Mountain](#)
[7. Southwest Harbor](#)
[8. Schoodic](#)
[9. Trenton](#)
[10. Blackwoods](#)
[Bicycle Express](#)

GETTING TO ACADIA

[Car-free Travel Guide](#)

WAYS TO EXPLORE

[Activity Guide](#)

MORE INFORMATION

[Rider Surveys & Comments](#)
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[Employment Opportunities](#)
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PARTNER LINKS

[Acadia National Park](#)
[Friends of Acadia](#)
[L.L.Bean](#)
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Acadia Free Shuttles



New Ways to Explore Acadia

The Island Explorer features ten bus routes linking hotels, inns, and campgrounds with destinations in Acadia National Park and neighboring village centers.

Clean propane-powered vehicles offer Mount Desert Island visitors and residents free transportation to hiking trails, carriage roads, island beaches, and in-town shops and restaurants.

THE ISLAND EXPLORER OPERATES JUNE 23 THROUGH COLUMBUS DAY (October 14, 2019). FALL SERVICE BEGINS ON AUGUST 27, 2019. Fall service on Schoodic Peninsula begins on September 1.



Schedules updated for 2019 on March 15, 2019.

L.L.Bean®

L.L.Bean pledges \$3 million to protect Acadia National Park

SPECIAL JULY 4 SCHEDULES

"A wonderful service. Best way to get around. Fun to ride. Happy drivers."

-Island Explorer passenger from Texas

"Using the bus really helped us to see and visit a lot more of the island."

-Acadia national Park visitor from England

"This makes the week a real vacation."

-Island Explorer passenger from Massachusetts

"Free is the way to be. I like your bus service."

-Island Explorer passenger from Franklin, Maine



ROUTE FINDER

Island Explorer maps and timetables...

SATELLITE VIEW

See the current location of Island Explorer buses.



Maps and timetables for year-round bus service.

NON-DISCRIMINATION & CIVIL RIGHTS



Acadia Free Shuttles



New Ways to Explore Acadia

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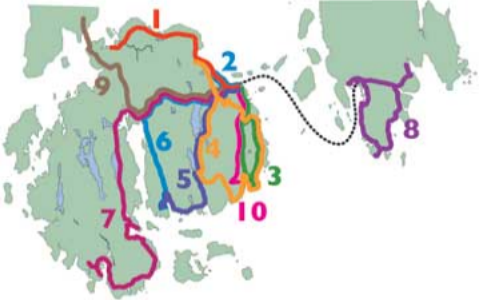
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Click on route numbers for detailed map and timetable information for individual bus routes.



Island Explorer summer schedules are in effect from June 23 through August 26, 2019. Fall service continues through Columbus Day (October 14, 2019). Bus service on Schoodic peninsula begins in late May.

[Click here for a DETAILED SYSTEM MAP of 2019 bus routes on Mount Desert Island.](#)

1. OCEANARIUM

The Oceanarium bus operates between the Oceanarium and the Bar Harbor Village Green, linking three private campgrounds with the Hulls Cove Visitor Center and Bar Harbor's village center. Transfer to Loop Road and Jordan Pond buses at the Visitor Center. Buses operate every 30 minutes throughout most of the day, and hourly in the evening. Fall service operates hourly.

2 Eden Street

The Eden Street bus connects hotels on Route 3 with the Bar Harbor Village Green. It also serves the Natural History Museum at the College of the Atlantic. From 6:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. buses operate every 30 minutes. From 3:30 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. this service runs every 15 minutes. Fall service operates every half hour.

3 Sand Beach

The Sand Beach bus operates between the Bar Harbor Village Green and Sand Beach. The service operates every 20 minutes during the day.

4 Loop Road

The Loop Road bus starts and ends at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center. It operates every half-hour, with service to Sieur de Monts, Sand Beach, Wildwood Stables, Jordan Pond, and Bubble Road. The Loop Road bus operates through Columbus

SATELLITE VIEW
See the current location
Island Explorer buses.



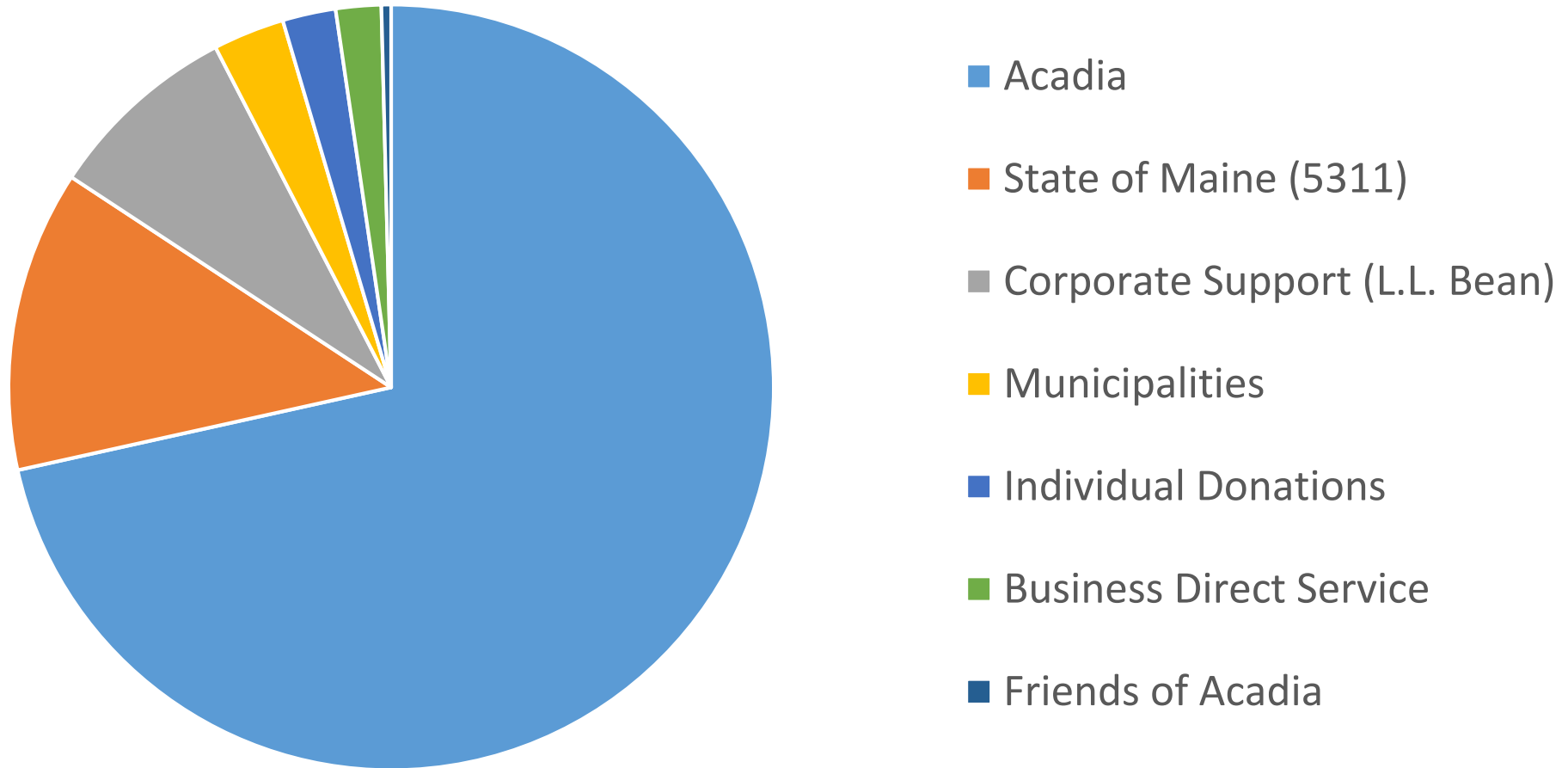
Maps and timetables for
year-round bus service

The Island Explorer's user-friendly routes, schedules and guides help visitors and locals know where to go and how to get there.

They create excitement about what the gateway communities have to offer.

The Island Explorer is funded mostly by Acadia National Park, but all partners benefit and all contribute.

Island Explorer Funding - \$2.5 million



Maine DOT and Downeast Transportation bring federal and local tax dollars to help fund the system



Hotels and other businesses pay for stops and market the Island Explorer as an amenity.



L.L. Bean is a Corporate Sponsor contributing \$200,000 a year.



The people we
talked to are
proud of their
system and
wanted to
make sure we
took away...

The Island Explorer

- Is essential to managing visitors in and out of the Park
- Is key to a positive visitor experience
- Expands options for visitors outside the Park
- Serves locals and workers
- Is a valuable economic sustainability and development tool
- Is a shared brand that everyone recognizes
- **Is worth the investment**

The Partnership

- Was and is championed by the Park
- Is based on mutual respect and appreciation of shared interests
- Is broad-based because all benefit
- Is what makes the Island Explorer work
- **Is worth the investment**

So what does this mean for the Flathead Valley?

Disneyland and Acadia are on to something



Other National Parks think so too



Visitor View Points = Great Visitor Experience









THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

**Logo is temporary and subject to change*

The Mountain Climber: Shared Interests

- **Manage visitors and mitigate any negative impact**
- **Enhance visitor experience and maximize positive effects**
- **Preserve, serve and benefit the Park/Flathead Valley**
- **Expand and leverage resources and use them efficiently**

The Mountain Climber: Features and Benefits

Connects major modes of transportation, lodging and desired destinations so visitors can choose to travel without a personal vehicle from arrival to departure and anywhere in between

- ⑩ Improves traffic flow, eases parking congestion and reduces infrastructure damage
- ⑩ Appeals to international and other visitors who use public transportation

Expands routes and stops and days/hours of operation within and between the gateway communities that allow visitors and locals to travel to a wider array of destinations and activities

- ⑩ Promotes “shoulder season” visitation
- ⑩ Supports business development, growth and sustainability
- ⑩ Provides workers with flexible and reliable transportation options

The Mountain Climber: Features and Benefits

Provides the foundation for robust year-round transit service

- ⑩ Hiker-biker service and post Labor Day service in the Park create demand in May, June and September
- ⑩ Skiing and other winter recreation create demand Thanksgiving through the first of April
- ⑩ Local travel and worker use increase as the system grows and improves
- ⑩ Shoulder season activities and year-round needs create interest in partnerships

The Mountain Climber: Features and Benefits

Operates under a single, identifiable brand

- ⑩ Visually and conceptually connects the Park to the Flathead Valley and the gateway communities to each other
- ⑩ Allows for routes that emphasize local flavor
- ⑩ Supports efficient marketing

Is partner-driven. All partners benefit and all contribute.

- ⑩ System is built on concept of shared interests and shared investment
- ⑩ Respects and addresses partners' unique perspectives and specific needs
- ⑩ Includes all partners in ongoing planning

Our Partners?

Glacier National Park

State of Montana DOT

Flathead County

Glacier Conservancy

Glacier Park International Airport

Amtrak

National Forest Service

Cities

Chambers of Commerce

Hotels and Businesses

Big Mountain Commercial Assoc.

Kalispell Regional Healthcare

FVCC

Foundations

Corporate Sponsor

Our L.L. Bean?



The Mountain Climber

What Service Could Look Like

FCA to Glacier Park

The Gateway Line

In 1894, Columbia Falls was proclaimed the healthiest town in the state of Montana. Today its best known as the Gateway to Glacier National Park. The *Gateway Line* will allow you to enjoy downtown Columbia Falls. Shop at The Shops at Station 8, the building was the first train depot in Columbia Falls in the 1880s, a vintage and antique shop or meander up Nucleus Ave. and explore the quaint shops. The Gunsight Saloon in the heart of downtown Columbia Falls, at one point the Last Chance Theater, enjoy their outdoor seating and outdoor music. O'Briens Made in Montana gift shop has something for everyone and hosts the weekly Thursday night Columbia Falls Community Market.

Huckleberry Patch

Hungry Horse claims fame as the *wild Huckleberry* capital of the West. The sweet tart wild berry grows in the moist mountain areas. Willow's Huckleberry Land Huckleberry Pie was voted #2 in the nation by USA Today. Their Huckleberry Shakes are known as the #1 shakes in the area. The Huckleberry Patch sells all things imaginable made from Huckleberries. Preserves, jellies, syrups, candies, candles, body and bath products, and bakery items.



Evergreen Super 1 Park 'N Ride	Glacier International Airport (FCA)	Country Inn & Suites	Super One Park 'N Ride	Historic Downtown Columbia Falls	Huckleberry Patch Hungry Horse	West Glacier	Apgar Visitor Center	Sprague Creek Campground	Lake McDonald Lodge	Avalanche Creek	Lake McDonald Lodge	Sprague Creek Campground	Apgar Visitor Center	West Glacier	Huckleberry Patch Hungry Horse	Historic Downtown Columbia Falls	Super One Park 'N Ride	Glacier International Airport (FCA)	Country Inn & Suites	Evergreen Super 1 Park 'N Ride
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6:45	7:15	7:16	7:27	7:27	7:37	7:42	8:02	8:19	8:23	8:36	8:49	8:53	9:10	9:30	9:35	9:35	9:50	10:20	10:21	
	8:27	8:28	8:39	8:39	8:49	8:54	9:14	9:31	9:35	9:48	10:01	10:05	10:22	10:42	10:47	10:47	11:02	11:32	11:33	
8:52	9:22	9:23	9:34	9:34	9:44	9:49	10:09	10:26	10:30	10:43	10:56	11:00	11:17	11:37	11:42	11:42	11:57	12:27	12:28	
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	16:30	16:31	16:42	16:42	16:52	16:57	17:17	17:34	17:38	17:51	18:04	18:08	18:25	18:45	18:50	18:50	19:05	19:35	19:36	19:46
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- ◆ Shopping & Eateries
- ◆ Breweries & Pubs
- ◆ Glacier Information Center
- ◆ Trails and Bikepaths

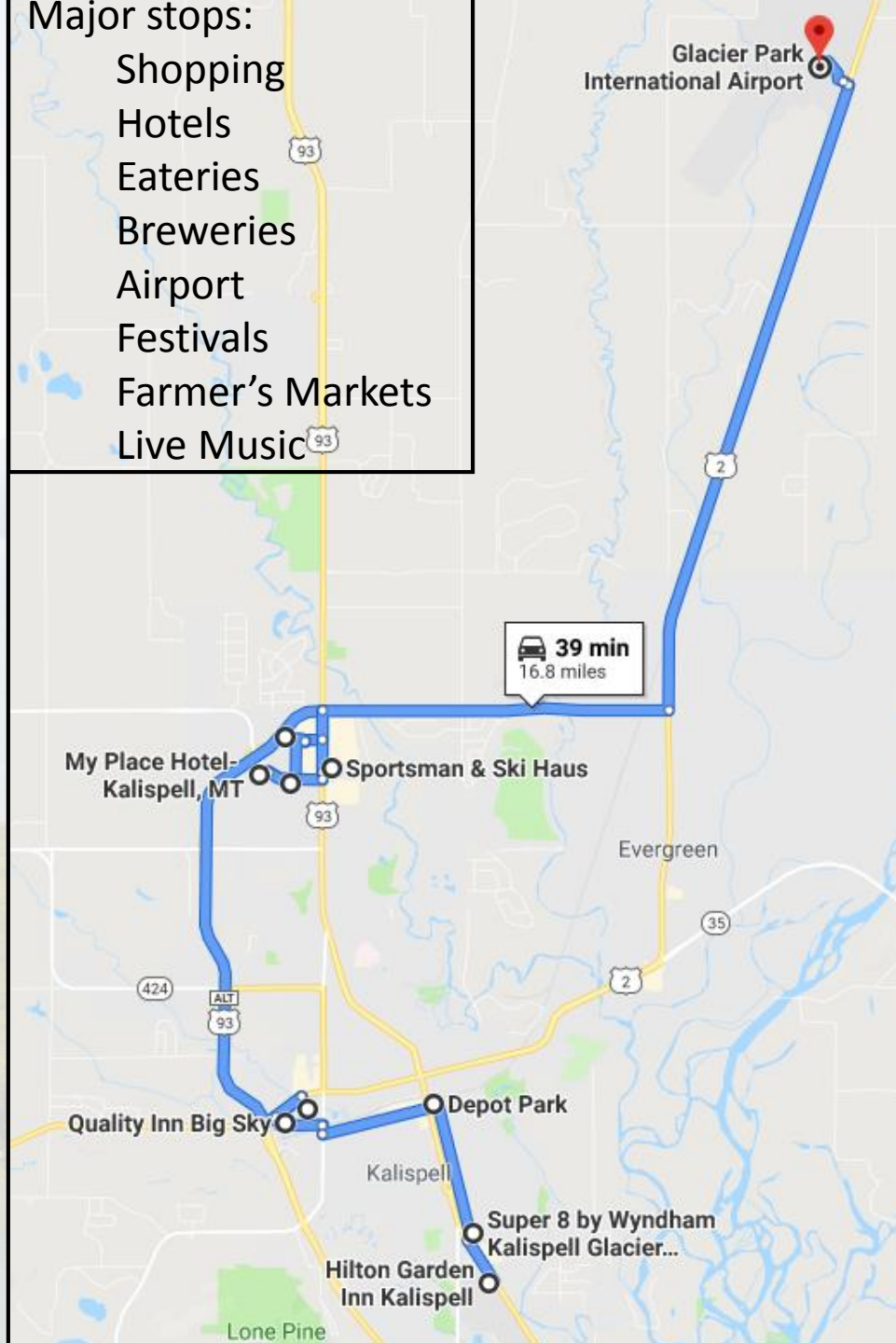
Kalispell to FCA

The Conrad Line

Charles E. Conrad, is best-known around these parts as a founder of Kalispell, "*The Land Above the Lake.*" He knew a good thing when he saw it. The **Conrad Line** provides transportation to our Downtown Historic District.

Kalispell's Main Street, rustic storefronts and vintage signs shout history. Norm's News, a family-friendly soda fountain and candy shop. The historic Moose's Saloon invites you in through a set of saloon doors into a warm social atmosphere enjoyed by all. Where the basic philosophy of "everyone belongs" to a bar and pizza parlor with floors covered in sawdust and peanut shells.

The *Conrad Line* will also transport passengers to the downtown local breweries and pubs offering live weekly music and food. Enjoy a family friendly drink at Bias or a rooftop drink, overlooking historic downtown Kalispell, at The Kalispell Brewery Co. Bike the "Rails for Trails" and park your bike at Sunrift Beer Company offering amazing outdoor patio seating. If you're in the mood for a trip to the Emerald Island, Brannigan's is the place to go offering authentic Irish fare.



Rosauers	Hilton Garden Inn	Super 8	Kalispell Brewery	Depot Park	Quality Inn	Hampton Inn	Holiday Inn Express	My Place Inn & Suites	Springhill Suites	Walmart Park 'N Ride	Sportsman Ski Haus	Glacier International Airport (FCA)	Counry Inn & Suites	Sportsman Ski Haus	Walmart Park 'N Ride	Springhill Suites	My Place Inn & Suites	Holiday Inn Express	Hampton Inn	Quality Inn	Depot Park	Kalispell Brewery	Super 8	Hilton Garden Inn	Rosauers
North-Eastbound												Turnaround		South-Westbound											
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	18:03	18:05	18:07	18:09	18:14	18:16	18:26	18:30	18:32	18:35	18:37	18:53	18:54	19:10	19:12	19:15	19:17	19:21	19:31	19:33	19:38	19:40	19:42	19:44	19:47
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	21:37	21:39	21:41	21:43	21:48	21:50	22:00	22:04	22:06	22:09	22:11	22:27	22:28	22:44	22:46	22:49	22:51	22:55	23:05	23:07	23:12	23:14	23:16	23:18	23:21

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Whitefish to FCA

The Stumptown Line

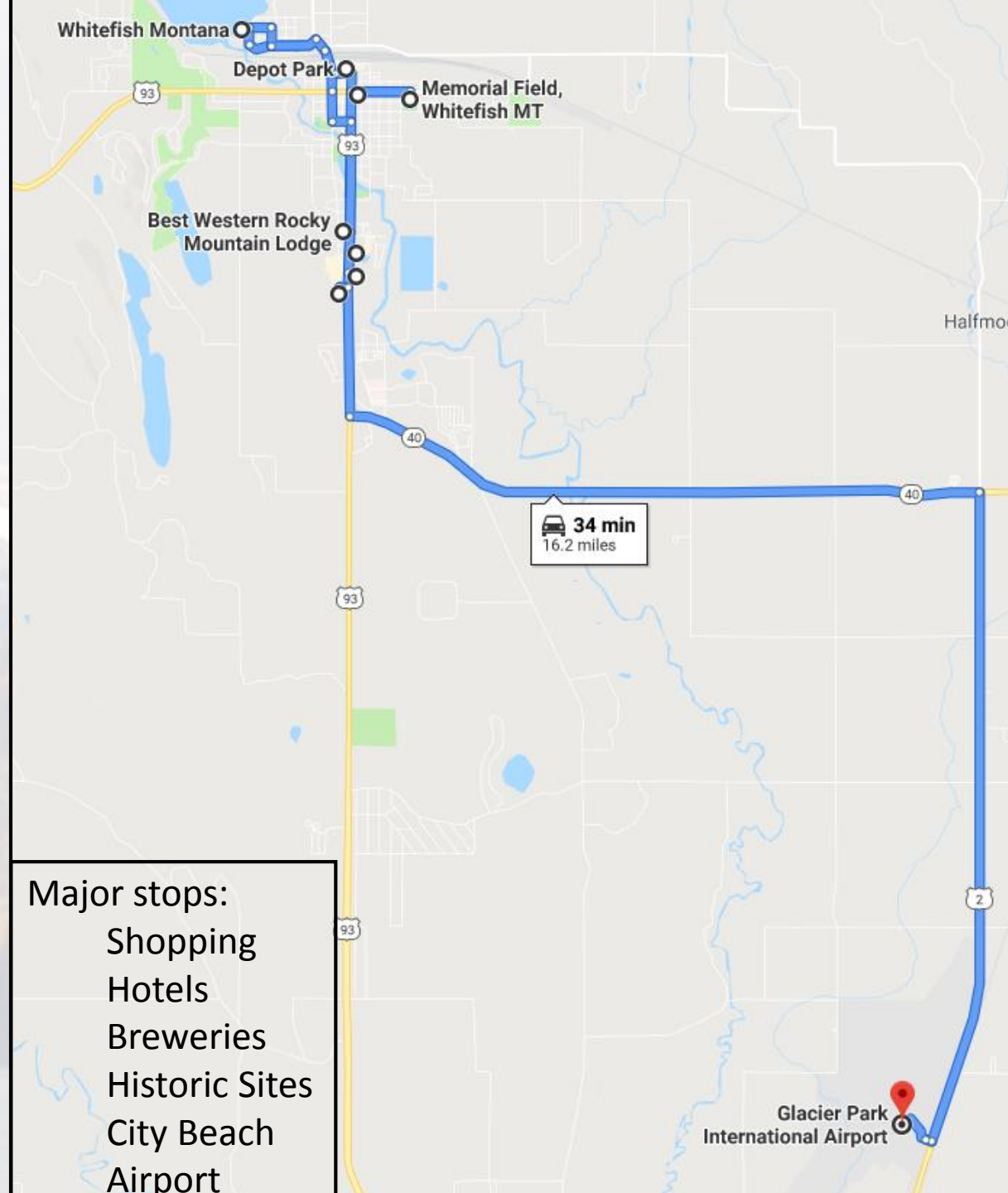
Initially Whitefish was called “Stumptown”, and for good reason. In 1901, the Great Northern Railway announced it would build in what is now Whitefish. Following the announcement, a clearing of the trees for the new town site was done leaving stumps behind. Hence the name “Stumptown.” The *Stumptown Line* provides transportation to the historic Railway District. Enjoy the Depot Museum or stroll through covered sidewalks of Central Avenue. Enjoy drink and food at the Bulldog Saloon, named in honor of the Whitefish High School mascot or Casey’s rooftop seating overlooking historic downtown Whitefish and the majestic Whitefish Mountain Range.

HEAD TO THE BEACH

The *Stumptown Line* takes you to Whitefish City Beach, a 7-mile glacial lake. On Busy days, the Whitefish City Beach parking lot fills to capacity and parked cars sometimes stretch for many blocks around the area. You will be happier on the bus.

I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM, WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM

Ride the *Conrad Line* and *Stumptown Line* to within blocks of Sweat Peaks Ice Cream. Located in the historic downtowns of Whitefish and Kalispell. Enjoy Mountain Made Ice Cream. Open every day 11 to 11.



Major stops:

- Shopping
- Hotels
- Breweries
- Historic Sites
- City Beach
- Airport

Townplace Marriott	Sportsman Ski Haus	Memorial Field Park 'N Ride	Firebrand Hotel & Restaurant	Depot Park Whitefish	Whitefish City Beach	Best Western Whitefish	Hampton Inn Whitefish	Glacier International Airport (FCA)
5:20	5:21	5:26	5:28	5:31	5:39	5:47	5:50	6:05
6:25	6:26	6:31	6:33	6:36	6:44	6:52	6:55	7:10
7:30	7:31	7:36	7:38	7:41	7:49	7:57	8:00	8:15
8:35	8:36	8:41	8:43	8:46	8:54	9:02	9:05	9:20
9:40	9:41	9:46	9:48	9:51	9:59	10:07	10:10	10:25
10:45	10:46	10:51	10:53	10:56	11:04	11:12	11:15	11:30
11:50	11:51	11:56	11:58	12:01	12:09	12:17	12:20	12:35
12:55	12:56	13:01	13:03	13:06	13:14	13:22	13:25	13:40
14:00	14:01	14:06	14:08	14:11	14:19	14:27	14:30	14:45
15:05	15:06	15:11	15:13	15:16	15:24	15:32	15:35	15:50
16:10	16:11	16:16	16:18	16:21	16:29	16:37	16:40	16:55
17:15	17:16	17:21	17:23	17:26	17:34	17:42	17:45	18:00
18:20	18:21	18:26	18:28	18:31	18:39	18:47	18:50	19:05
19:25	19:26	19:31	19:33	19:36	19:44	19:52	19:55	20:10
20:30	20:31	20:36	20:38	20:41	20:49	20:57	21:00	21:15
21:35	21:36	21:41	21:43	21:46	21:54	22:02	22:05	22:20

- Shopping & Eateries
- Breweries & Pubs
- Glacier Information Center
- Trails and Bikepaths



Apgar to Avalanche

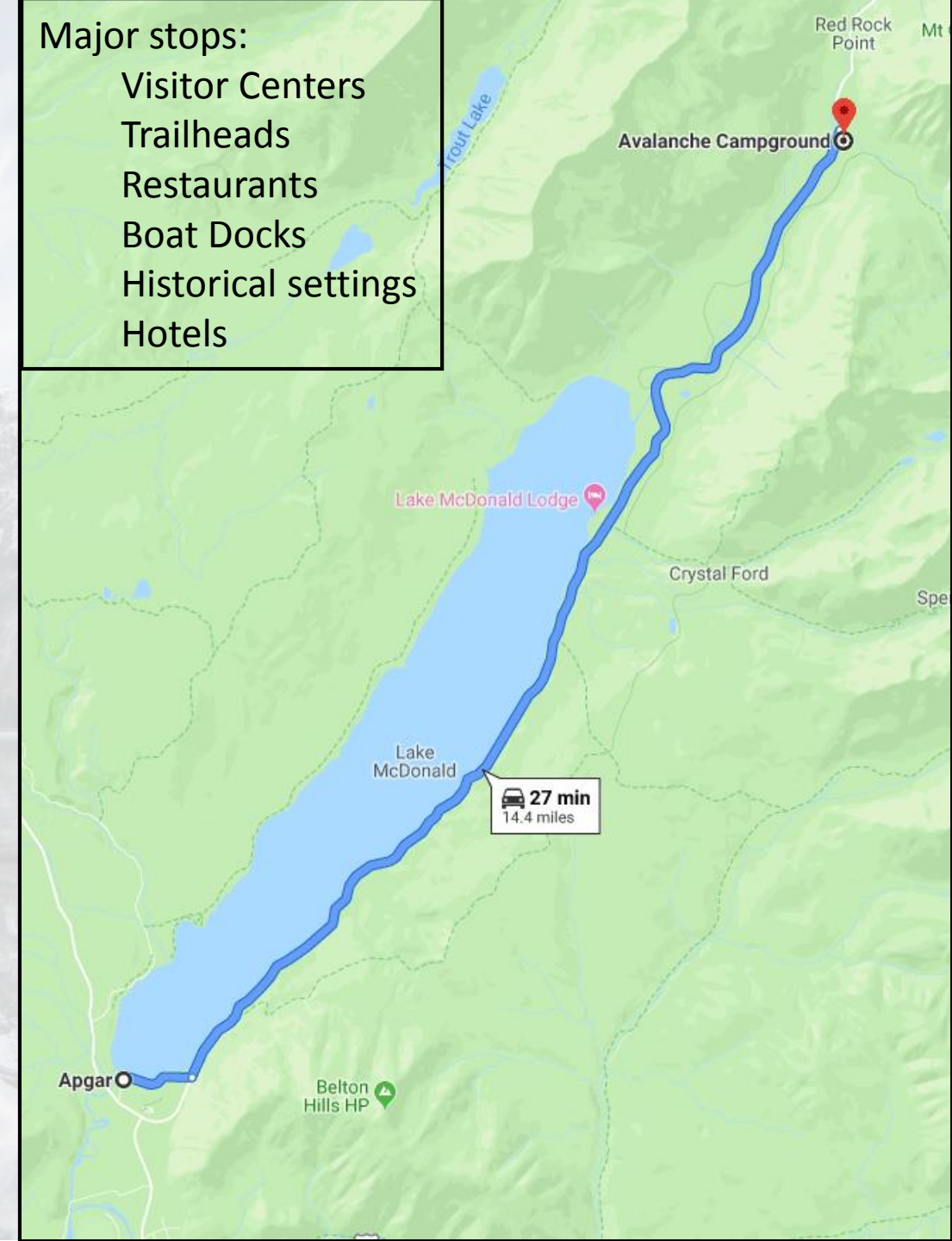
The Avalanche Line

Apgar Visitor Center

It's a good place to start when entering at West Glacier. It provides visitor information services, pick-up and drop-off services for the park's shuttle system and concession-operated tour. There is a retail area, restaurant and bookshop operated by Glacier National Park Conservancy. Ranger-led activities for kids to enjoy.

Major stops:

- Visitor Centers
- Trailheads
- Restaurants
- Boat Docks
- Historical settings
- Hotels



Avalanche to Logan Pass

The Alpine Line

Logan Pass Visitor Center

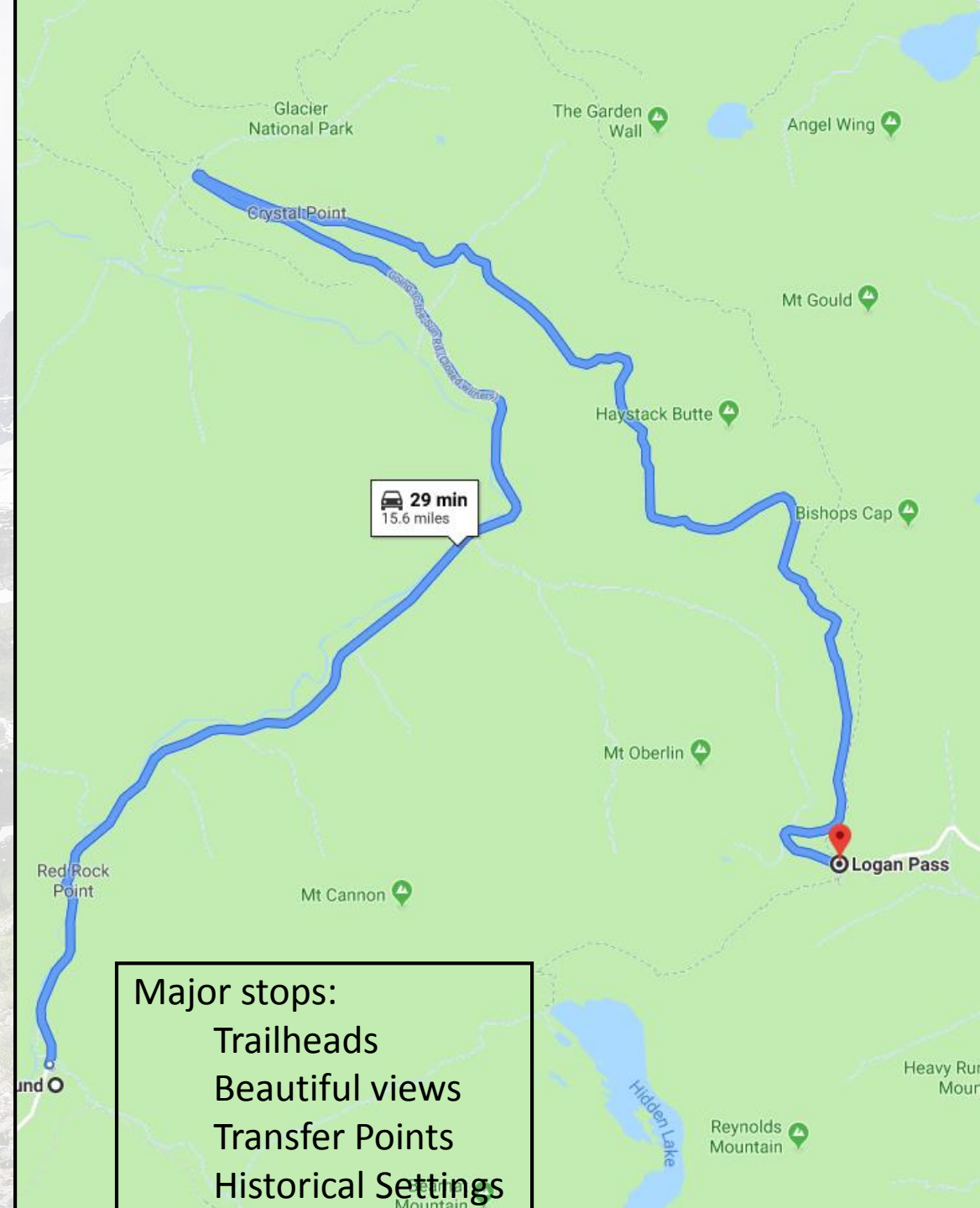
Is the highest elevation (6646ft) reachable by car in the park. It is extremely popular with visitors and the parking lot is generally full between 8:30am and 4:00pm. Consider visiting this destination by using the *free* shuttles to avoid limited parking. Hike the Hidden Lake trail and the Highline Trail.

Highline Loop Trail

The Highline Trail is a heavily trafficked out and back trail along the Continental Divide. The exceptionally beautiful views, with excellent opportunities of spotting wildlife and beautiful wild flowers. It runs from Logan Pass Visitor Center to the *Loop Trail* Head along the *Garden Wall*. The Loop Trail is a popular trail due to being a “cut off” of sorts for a day hike on the Highline Trail. From there, the Loop Trail is used to access the “Loop”, which is the hairpin turn on the Going-to-the-Sun Road. The Loop provides shuttles to the Logan Pass Visitor Center.

However, hikers can choose to continue on the Highline Trail at 3.6 miles, hikers will reach *Haystack Pass* and at 6.9 miles hikers will reach the *Garden Wall Trail*. This optional trail will reach to top of the Continental Divide with views of The Salamander and Grinnell Glacier.

At 7.6 mile hikers will reach the *Granite Park Trail junction*. Towards the right, the Highline Trail continues towards the Fifty Mountain Backcountry Campground roughly 12 miles away. It also leads to the *Swiftcurrent Pass Trail*.



Major stops:

Trailheads

Beautiful views

Transfer Points

Historical Settings

Logan Pass to St. Mary

The St. Mary Line

St. Mary's Falls Trailhead

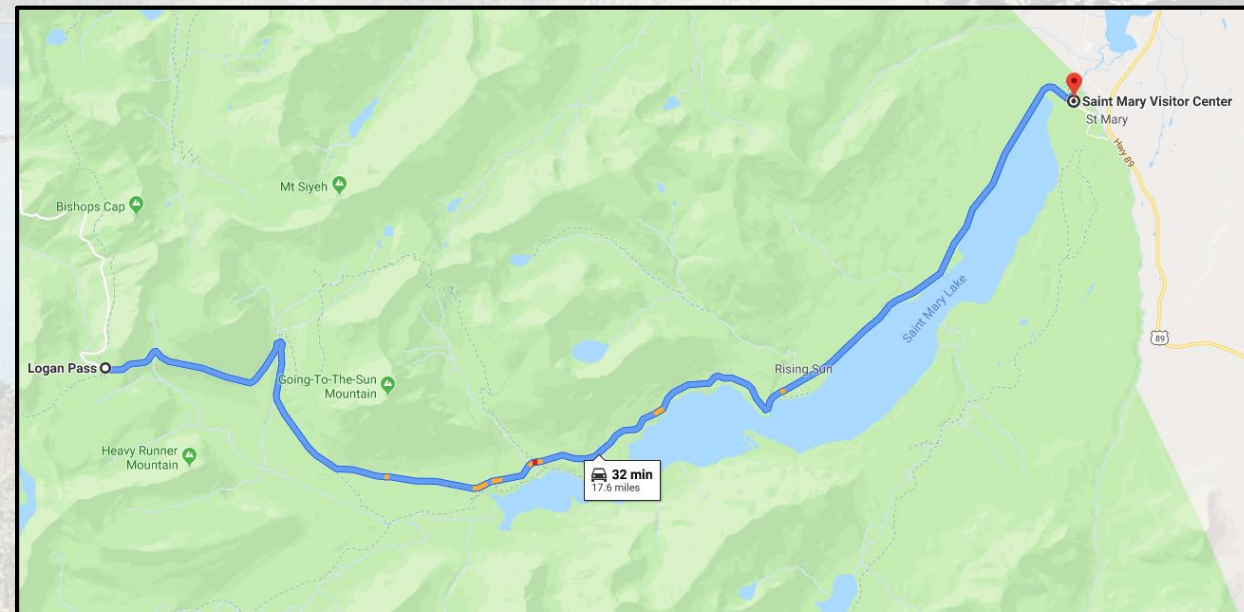
With limited parking, and all three waterfalls in this area being popular destination parking can be an issue during the summer season. We recommend taking the shuttle from Sun Point or Rising Sun to reach St. Mary's Falls Trailhead.

Rising Sun/Rising Sun Trailhead

"The mountains meet the prairies" just west of St. Mary and halfway along St. Mary Lake. Visit Rising Sun Motor Inn & Cabins, Two Dog Flats Grill, Rising Sun Campground and picnic area. The Rising Sun Trail is less than 1 mile and connects the campground to a boat dock. Enjoy the peaks of Red Eagle and Mahtotopa towering over the lake as well as nice rocky beaches.

Major stops:

- Trailheads
- Restaurants
- Boat Docks
- Beautiful Views
- Visitor Centers
- Historical Settings



Let's end with a sunset



Next Steps

Commit to the vision of an integrated transit system

Get to work!

- Establish workgroup of stakeholders
- Obtain commitment from potential sponsors and partners
- Develop routes/stops and implementation plan and timeline

Questions?

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